



United States Mission to the OSCE

Statement on Prevention of Aggressive Nationalism, Chauvinism and Ethnic Cleansing

As prepared for delivery by Head of Delegation Lorne Craner
to the OSCE Human Dimension Implementation Meeting
Warsaw, September 28, 2005

The year 2005 is a year of numerous anniversaries – some are occasions for celebration, while others serve as reminders of the darker side of humanity.

In discussing this session's topic, it is appropriate to draw our attention to the 10th anniversary of the massacre at Srebrenica, which the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia has asserted meets the definition of genocide. The attack of the so-called "safe area" of Srebrenica was the worst single failure both to respect and defend Helsinki principles. A decade later, other developments linked to the violent disintegration of the former Yugoslavia evoke mixed emotions. For example, the Dayton Agreement is generally credited for ending the conflict in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Yet it is also criticized for its compromises that to this day still cause bitterness and hinder progress.

Indeed, lingering wounds of aggressive nationalism, chauvinism and ethnic cleansing inflicted on southeastern Europe a decade ago are far from healed. As long as Ratko Mladic and Radovan Karadzic, among others charged by the international tribunal with war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide, continue to evade justice, this healing process will be impeded. Each new revelation of the evils done to non-Serbs during the Milosevic years also reveals the persistence of widespread denial of those evils in Serbia today. This denial is a misguided path, chosen by those Serbian parties perpetuating a dangerously nationalistic trend in politics, and it frustrates Serbia's goal of integrating with Euro-Atlantic institutions.

The tenth anniversary of Croatia's 1995 Operation Storm has also stirred much controversy. Setting aside the debate over what happened and why, the fact is that Serbs fled Croatia en masse. Such a loss of population should detract from any sense of victory. Meanwhile, it is unfortunate that a country otherwise ready for Euro-Atlantic integration has squandered its opportunity by failing to produce one individual -- indicted war criminal Ante Gotovina -- to ICTY prosecutors.

The United States remains concerned about the continued plight of the displaced from Kosovo, who include ethnic Serbs, Roma and members of other groups. Kosovar Albanians faced years of repression and terror before 1999. Some Kosovar Albanians

now victimize Serb and Roma returnees through hateful and violent acts. As long as this misguided attempt for “revenge” prevails, progress in meeting standards expected in Kosovo that reflect OSCE human rights commitments will be hindered.

We would be remiss if we did not mention the unknown fate of the many missing victims on all sides of these conflicts. Surviving friends and family must have access to information about what happened to loved ones. Participating States should support the efforts of the International Commission of Missing Persons, among others, to find the answers.

This year, the United States commemorates the 140th anniversary of the end of its own, Civil War. While the American Civil War differs from contemporary conflicts in important ways, remembering that history can also be helpful. In that spirit I would like to quote Abraham Lincoln’s second inaugural address in March 1865:

With malice toward none; with charity for all; with firmness in the right, as God gives us to see the right, let us strive on to finish the work we are in; to bind up the nation’s wounds; to care for him who shall have borne the battle, and for his widow, and his orphan – to do all which may achieve and cherish a just and lasting peace, among ourselves, and with all nations.

Lincoln, who fell to an assassin’s bullet just weeks after speaking these words, had a single message for all Americans. He challenged his divided country to a correct path, one we still try to follow. His remarks and the path he set have relevance for political leaders dealing with the aftermath of aggressive nationalism, chauvinism and ethnic cleansing today.

Mr. Chairman, I wish to share the last 15 seconds of my time with all gathered here, to sit in silent memory of the many thousands of innocent people who, regardless of their ethnicity, lost their lives to aggressive nationalism, chauvinism and ethnic cleansing in the OSCE region during these last 30 years.

Thank you.